

Public Involvement Plan



Maine Department of Transportation

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DRAFT



Draft Public Involvement Plan

Maine Department of Transportation

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Introduction

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) is pleased to present this Draft Public Involvement Plan to demonstrate its commitment to inform as many people as possible about transportation decision-making and to solicit meaningful feedback into the transportation planning process.

MaineDOT's public involvement initiatives were created upon the principle that everyone who uses Maine's public transportation system is a customer of the planning and decision-making process. As such, they are invited and encouraged to participate in the transportation planning process early, regularly and continuously. Public involvement and MaineDOT's Resource Allocation Policy are key factors in transportation decision-making.

This plan outlines existing and proposed procedures for public involvement in transportation planning and programming. MaineDOT may take additional measures as appropriate to increase opportunities for involvement. As indicated in Section 1, all actions will comply with State and federal law.

Section 2 discusses the public's role in State legislative matters associated with transportation. The Legislature may direct MaineDOT and other agencies to participate in studies which require public input. MaineDOT may also be required to go through a public rule-making process.

Section 3 discusses public involvement involved in the development of MaineDOT's Twenty-Year Transportation Plan (Twenty-Year Plan) and Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (Six-Year Plan). This enables MaineDOT to incorporate public input into both the development of long-term goals via the Twenty-Year Plan and the implementation of them through the Six-Year Plan and the Biennial Transportation Improvement Program (BTIP).

Section 4 provides information on standing transportation committees and Section 5 describes special purpose committees that participate in transportation planning. The make-up and jurisdiction of these committees ensure that MaineDOT receives substantive advice from both urban and rural areas and on all transportation modes.

MaineDOT Resource Allocation Policy

This policy establishes how MaineDOT should effectively invest its resources to advance its mission.

1. Meet system preservation needs.

Good management of a large system of capital facilities like the state's transportation system requires a continuing investment in system preservation.

2. Invest in system modernization needs for all modes.

When system preservation needs have been addressed, MaineDOT will invest its resources in the significant number of transportation infrastructure modernization needs. A safe and efficient transportation system is key to the state's economic growth.

3. Invest in transportation system management and travel demand management alternatives.

In today's economic and environmental climate, the demand for transportation mobility must be addressed, to the extent possible, through actions that maximize the efficiency of our existing transportation infrastructure.

4. Invest in all modes of transportation.

MaineDOT must continue its efforts to provide a "seamless" interconnection between all modes, both for passengers and freight. Mobility options such as trains, buses, air and ferries can be efficient, environmentally sensitive and cost-effective modal choices.

5. Target limited resources for new capacity to the highest priorities.

Funding for new capacity projects is extremely limited. Only those projects supporting state and regional transportation goals and strategies and those that have demonstrated merit and strong public support will be considered.

Next, Section 6 provides information on public involvement for specific transportation projects. Depending on the nature and public interest in a project, associated public involvement may vary from a project specific advisory committee to a minimum of two public meetings on project design.

Lastly, Section 7 discusses MaineDOT's additional efforts to inform as many individuals as possible about transportation in Maine and opportunities for meaningful public input into the transportation planning process. These include formal publications, the media and creative use of available technology.

This document is available to the public via the Internet and through discussions at Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) meetings listed below. MaineDOT will also accept feedback on this draft until July 1, 2003. Comments may be submitted to the Bureau of Planning, MaineDOT, 16 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333 re: Public Involvement Plan or to tara.ranks@maine.gov. The final Public Involvement Plan is anticipated in September 2003. More information about each RTAC meeting may be obtained by contacting the Bureau of Planning at 207-624-3300.

Region	Location	Date	Time
RTAC 1	Northern Maine Development Commission	May 13, 2003	3:00pm
RTAC 2	Cherryfield Town Hall	May 7, 2003	3:45pm
RTAC 3	Eastern Maine Development Commission	May 8, 2003	2:30pm
RTAC 4	Skowhegan Municipal Building	May 7, 2003	10:00am
RTAC 5	Rockland Municipal Building	June 11, 2003	2:00pm
RTAC 6	Scarborough Municipal Building	May 20, 2003	5:30pm
RTAC 7	MaineDOT Dixfield Division 7 Office	May 15, 2003	4:00pm

1.0 State and Federal Law

MaineDOT's public involvement integrates both State and federal public involvement activities which exceed all relevant State and federal laws which articulate the regulations for public involvement in statewide transportation planning.

1.1 Sensible Transportation Policy Act

The Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA) was enacted through voter referendum in November 1991. The STPA and MaineDOT's associated rule created a planning process that provides meaningful public involvement opportunities and gives proper consideration to the diverse transportation needs of the people of the State, transportation efficiency, energy conservation, and the effects of transportation on the environment. MaineDOT's STPA rule is available at <ftp://ftp.state.me.us/pub/sos/cec/rcn/apa/17/229/229c103.doc>.

1.2 Federal Requirements for Statewide Planning

The federal government, through its Constitution, Statutes, Government-wide Directives, Agency Regulations and Grant Agreements, establishes the regulations within which statewide transportation planning must occur. These regulations include the following components:

- Statewide Transportation Planning factors,
- Public Involvement in the Statewide Transportation Planning process,
- The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program,
- Requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

State Mandated Public Involvement

The STPA directs MaineDOT's planning, capital investment and project development decision-making as follows:

- Promote the coordinated and efficient use of all available and future modes of transportation.
- Meet the diverse transportation needs of the people of the state, including rural and urban populations and the unique mobility needs of the elderly and disabled.
- Ensure the repair and necessary improvements of roads and bridges throughout the state to provide a safe, efficient, and adequate transportation network.
- Minimize the harmful effects of transportation on public health and on air and water quality, land use and other natural resources.
- Reduce the state's reliance on foreign oil and promote reliance on energy efficient forms of transportation.
- Be consistent with the purposes, goals and policies of the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act.
- Incorporate a public participation process in which local governmental bodies and the public have timely notice and opportunity to identify and comment on transportation concerns.

More information on Federal requirements in the statewide transportation planning is available at: www.fhwa.dot.gov/////hep10/state/index.html.

1.3 Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994 directed every Federal agency to make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on "minority populations and low-income populations." The DOT's environmental justice initiatives accomplish this goal by involving the potentially affected public in developing transportation projects that fit harmoniously within their communities without sacrificing safety or mobility.

Environmental Justice and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are not new concerns. Today, because of the evolution of the transportation planning process, they are receiving greater emphasis. Effective transportation decision-making depends upon understanding and properly addressing the unique needs of different socioeconomic groups. This is more than a desktop exercise; it requires involving the public. The U.S. DOT is committed to this more comprehensive, inclusive approach. These changes make sure that every transportation project nationwide considers the human environment.

The three fundamental environmental justice principles are:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

More information on Environmental Justice is available at the Federal Highway

Administration's Environmental Justice website

available at: www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ejustice/facts/index.htm and

www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ej2000.htm. Detailed information concerning MaineDOT's policy may be obtained by contacting the Planning Bureau at 624-3300.

Applied Public Involvement and Project Stakeholder Participation Approaches and Innovations

Integrated Transportation Decision-making (ITD)

During 1997, MaineDOT began to develop a new framework for integrating environmental and transportation decision-making throughout the Department. This framework interfaces planning, location, design, right-of-way, construction, maintenance, and environmental operations by fully integrating the decision-making processes of the State and federal government.

The overall goals of MaineDOT's Integrated Transportation Decision-making process are to express:

- well-defined environmental policies and statements,
- protect the human and natural environment,
- establish an environmentally conscious organization with an institutionalized environmental ethic that directly influences daily decision-making,
- encourage broader use of collaboration and consensus building, both internally and externally, through stakeholder cooperation and participation,
- seek balanced transportation infrastructure development, and
- promote environmental accountability throughout MaineDOT for actions that affect environmental quality.

2.0 Public's Role in Legislative Matters affecting Transportation

The Maine Legislature is entrusted with managing the affairs of the State. The Joint Standing Committee on Transportation (Transportation Committee) has jurisdiction over all transportation policy. Combined with the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Fiscal Matters, it has jurisdiction over all transportation related fiscal issues supported by the Highway Fund and the General Fund.

The Transportation Committee holds public hearings and work sessions on all transportation related bills sponsored by legislators, the Governor, or through petition. It reviews all Highway Fund budgets including that of the MaineDOT, the Secretary of State and the Department of Public Safety. The Transportation Committee also reviews the toll-supported budget of the Maine Turnpike Authority. It reports to the full Legislature on bills and budgets, which are debated and resolved on the floors of each body of the Legislature. While the Transportation and Appropriations Committees are the primary legislative committees governing transportation matters, other key committees affecting transportation include the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation, which sets the level of fuel taxes, and the Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources, which sets policy on environmental issues.

MaineDOT submits the Biennial Transportation Improvement Program (BTIP) to the Legislature in support of its budget request. The BTIP outlines all capital improvement projects MaineDOT expects to fund and estimates the federal, State and local funding shares. Thus, it implements the goals of the Twenty-Year Plan and Six-Year Plan. As discussed in Section 3.0, municipalities, County Commissioners for unorganized territories and Indian Tribal Governments are asked for transportation priorities as the Six-Year Plan and BTIP are developed. Stakeholders, including members of the public, are also invited to comment on transportation improvement priorities through the public involvement process for the Six-Year Plan. When the BTIP is submitted to the Legislature, it is posted on www.maine.gov/mdot. Notice of the BTIP's availability is published in newspapers. MaineDOT also makes a copy available at all Metropolitan Planning Organizations, MaineDOT Division Offices and depository libraries.

Some bills passed by the Legislature affecting MaineDOT require rule-making. The Administrative Procedures Act, 5 M.R.S.A. Chapter 375, sub-chapter 2-A, establishes the public process for developing rules associated with implementing specific State laws or policies. Public hearings, public comment periods and notice of rules availability are published in accordance with procedures promulgated under this Act.

The Legislature may also direct MaineDOT to participate in studies. Specific public participation approaches vary and are usually outlined in the authorizing Legislation and explained in any final reports. Most studies involve a task force or steering committee which includes appropriate stakeholders.

3.0 Public Involvement in MaineDOT's Planning Documents

The Twenty-Year Transportation Plan (Twenty-Year Plan) and the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (Six-Year Plan) are MaineDOT's principal planning documents. Other planning documents guide transportation decision-making and serve as supporting documents to the Twenty-Year Plan and Six-Year Plan such as the State of the System Report, a technical assessment of the condition, performance and needs of the transportation infrastructure, and other plans in which needs, goals and objectives are outlined. Other planning documents include the Transportation Indicators Report, Explore Maine, the State Visitor Information Center Plan, the Maine Transit Needs Study, the Biennial Operations Plans, the Maine Aviation Systems Plan, the Integrated Freight Plan, the Heavy Haul Truck Network, the Commercial Vehicle Service Plan, the Clean Government Initiative Biennial Report and the Final Report of the Task Force on Rail Transportation.

MaineDOT also supports the development of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) Regional Advisory Reports. These documents are created by the RTACs with Regional Planning Commission assistance. Each one includes information about each RTAC region and contains prioritized policy advice for incorporation into MaineDOT's long-term planning. Copies of the most recent RTAC reports are available at www.maine.gov/mdot/planning/planningdiv/rars.htm.

3.1 The Twenty-Year Plan

The Twenty-Year Plan is a comprehensive multimodal transportation plan that sets goals, objectives and strategies for MaineDOT to pursue in response to overall transportation needs. MaineDOT updates the Twenty-Year Plan every three years to meet the State mandate of a long-range multimodal plan of at least 10 years and the federal mandate of a long-range plan of at least 20 years. As per the STPA, MaineDOT's Twenty-Year Plan evaluates and makes recommendations for improvement to the following systems:

- Current highway and bridge system,
- Public transit service,
- Intercity and local passenger rail and bus service,
- Bicycle lanes, paths and facilities,
- Sidewalks, trails and other pedestrian facilities,
- Seaports, airports including access to these facilities,
- Freight rail service,
- Transportation demand management,
- Ridesharing and other multiple occupant vehicle programs,
- Scenic, historic and natural resource connections with transportation systems, and
- Current and emerging technological innovations relative to transportation.

An Opportunity for New/ Continued Partnerships

MaineDOT is currently updating its Twenty-Year Plan for publication by early 2004 and working with the RTACs on public involvement strategies.

Proposed public involvement activities include:

- Regional assessments of the allocation of transportation resources.
- Outreach to State and federal agencies on long-term goals and opportunities for partnerships.
- Input on regional transportation priorities.
- Coordination with Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Regional Planning Commissions.

MaineDOT alternates between a technical update and a comprehensive update of the Twenty-Year Plan. The technical update is done primarily to conform to Clean Air Act Amendments. Once in draft form, it is made available to the public through posting a notice in the newspaper and by publishing the plan on www.maine.gov/mdot. A comment period of at least 45 days is established with instructions for commenting. MaineDOT also makes a copy of the draft available at all Metropolitan Planning Organizations, MaineDOT Division Offices and depository libraries.

When MaineDOT begins a comprehensive Twenty-Year Plan update, MaineDOT attempts to solicit meaningful public input from as many members of the public and other transportation stakeholders as possible. Efforts include outreach to the public via the media, Regional Transportation Advisory Committees, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Regional Planning Agencies, State and quasi-state agencies and federal partner agencies. MaineDOT solicits information on draft long-term transportation goals prior to drafting objectives and strategies. MaineDOT's Twenty-Year Plan also incorporates the Maine Turnpike Authority's long-range plan.

Once in draft form, the Twenty-Year Plan is posted at www.maine.gov/mdot and MaineDOT informs all known interested stakeholders, including but not limited to municipalities, county governments, tribal governments, committees members discussed in Section 4 and 5, State and federal agency partners and regional planning agencies. MaineDOT also makes a copy of the draft available at all Metropolitan Planning Organizations, MaineDOT Division Offices and depository libraries.

For the comprehensive update, MaineDOT holds at least one public meeting on the draft Twenty-Year Plan advertised via public notice in major newspapers. Notices announcing the public meeting provide instructions for commenting on the draft. State rules specify that the draft plan be available for at least 20 working days prior to the public meeting and federal law requires a 45 day comment period upon release of the draft of which no fewer than 15 days are after the public meeting.

3.2 Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan

The Six-Year Plan is updated every two years to link the goal oriented Twenty-Year Plan to the project based BTIP. It allows MaineDOT to prioritize bridges and sections of unbuilt highway, usually roads constructed pre-1950, which do not meet modern design standards. Transportation initiatives and selected passenger and freight transportation projects that MaineDOT intends to fund over the next six year period are also included.

Although certain transportation improvement projects such as resurfacing, intersection improvements, ditching, etc. are not listed in the Six-Year Plan, primarily because MaineDOT continuously gathers and evaluates safety and road condition data, they nevertheless move forward into each BTIP.

Linking Long-term Goals to Transportation Improvement Projects

The Six-Year Plan, created in 2000, links the policy based Twenty-Year Plan to the project based BTIP. The Six-Year Plan allows:

- Earlier input into the project planning process,
- Time for State agencies, business interests, utilities and communities to coordinate capital improvement projects with MaineDOT, and
- MaineDOT to effectively manage its financial and project development resources.

In addition to input into the Six-Year Plan and the development of RTAC Regional Advisory Reports, the RTAC's advise MaineDOT about the prioritization process for the inclusion of sections or corridors of unbuilt highway into the Six-Year Plan. Depending upon anticipated resources when each Six-Year Plan is developed and currency of the priorities associated with the transportation corridors, the RTACs may participate in a prioritization process for the Six-Year Plan where each RTAC has input into the criteria used to rank projects in its region. If a comprehensive ranking process is not included in a Six-Year Plan update, each RTAC is asked to indicate any significant transportation or land use changes which may have affected the previous ranking.

When MaineDOT begins to update the Six-Year Plan and develop the BTIP, it sends a project solicitation packet to stakeholders including all municipalities, county commissioners for unorganized territories and tribal government officials. Responding to this package is the most effective step for them to make MaineDOT aware of their transportation improvement needs. MaineDOT accepts project requests for at least 30 days after the solicitation is mailed.

After packets are mailed, MaineDOT, through Regional Planning Agencies, follows-up with Municipal, County or Tribal government officials that have not responded in order to determine if they require assistance with the solicitation form. Other groups and individuals may communicate project priorities directly to municipalities.

Customer Responsiveness and Continuous Improvement

Based on input from a number of RTACs on MaineDOT's recent solicitation packet for the Six-Year Plan and BTIP, MaineDOT expects to improve this process to allow for:

- More input on regional priorities,
- Project nominations or comments from municipalities about projects outside their municipal boundaries,
- Earlier technical assistance with solicitation packets, and
- Input from a broader stakeholder list.

MaineDOT develops a draft Six-Year Plan that is posted on www.maine.gov/mdot and made available to RTAC members. MaineDOT also makes a copy of the draft available at all Metropolitan Planning Organizations, MaineDOT Division Offices and depository libraries. MaineDOT issues press releases on the Six-Year Plan. These explain the Six-Year Plan and indicate how individuals may respond. MaineDOT holds up to seven regional public meetings on the draft plan and accepts comments for at least 45 days from when the draft document is published of which no fewer than 15 are after the final public meeting. A synopsis of substantive public comments is included in the final Six-Year Plan.

Competitive Programs

As part of the development of the Six-Year Plan and BTIP, municipalities and non-profit groups may apply directly to partner with MaineDOT for projects ranging from pedestrian facilities and streetscape improvements to coastal municipal facilities such as piers, landings and boat ramps:

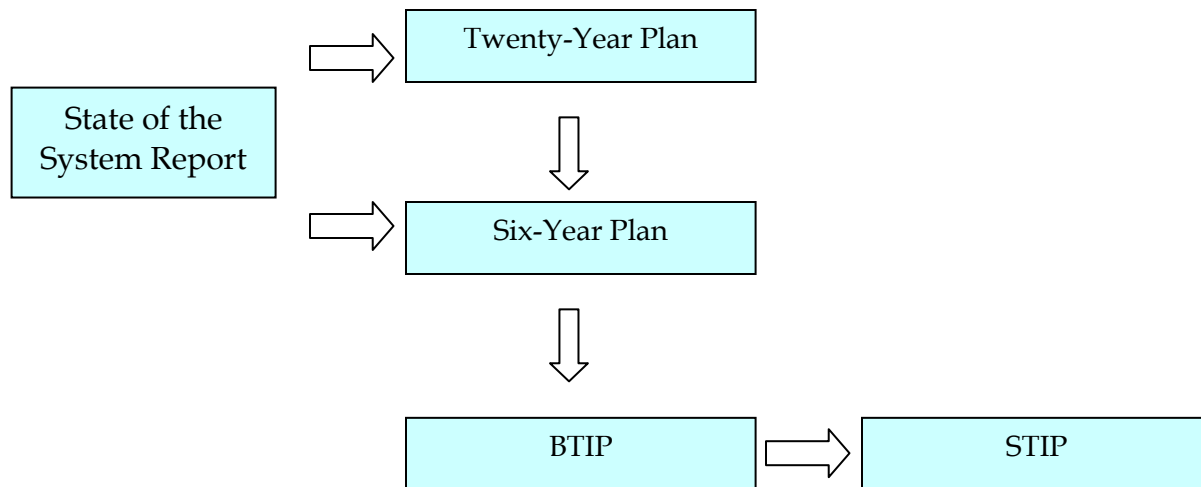
- Transportation Enhancement Program,
- Rural Road Initiative,
- Community Gateways Program,
- Small Harbor Improvement Program, and
- Surface Water Quality Protection Program.

3.3 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

Once MaineDOT's budget is approved by the Legislature, MaineDOT outlines State and federal transportation funding reflected in the federally mandated Statewide Transportation Improvement

Program (STIP), updated every two years. The STIP is a multi-year, multi-modal program of transportation projects consistent with all other transportation plans developed within the State. During the development of the STIP, factors such as anticipated federal revenue, project development resources, and the effects of program implementation on the State's air quality are considered.

Once the draft STIP is developed, notice of its availability is published in major newspapers, and it is posted at www.maine.gov/mdot. MaineDOT also makes a copy of the draft available at all Metropolitan Planning Organizations, MaineDOT Division Offices and depository libraries. MaineDOT accepts written comments on the STIP for at least 14 and up to 30 calendar days after the date of the notice.



3.4 Other Planning Documents

MaineDOT develops other special purpose plans as needed or when directed by the Legislature or Governor. For example, the proposed Visitor Information Center Plan was required by the Legislature and was developed in conjunction with the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Maine Tourism Association. If endorsed by the Legislature, MaineDOT will meet with local officials to determine support for projects and outline any project design considerations that are likely to impact project cost. As MaineDOT moves forward with additional Department-wide planning documents, MaineDOT will develop appropriate public involvement activities.

4.0 Standing Advisory Committees and Transportation Authorities

For many of the planning documents noted above, MaineDOT has instituted specific public involvement processes to assist with developing policies, goals, objectives and strategies. These include standing transportation advisory committees based both by region and mode of transportation. Where appropriate, MaineDOT also participates in transportation and public involvement activities of Maine's transportation authorities.

4.1. Regional Transportation Advisory Committees

In 1991, Maine citizens enacted the Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA) through referendum. One of STPA's components directed MaineDOT to develop rules to systematically incorporate public input into the transportation planning process. As part of the rule making process, MaineDOT formed seven Regional Transportation Advisory Committees (RTACs).

RTACs are advisory committees consisting of citizens representing diverse interests. Members include individuals representing environmental, business, municipal, State, alternative modes of transportation interests and members of the general public. The purpose of the RTACs is to provide early and effective input into MaineDOT's transportation planning process.

Continuous Input into Public Involvement

MaineDOT's seven RTACs help MaineDOT develop and coordinate a public participation process providing for early and effective public involvement in local and regional transportation planning. The role of the RTACs as outlined in the STPA rule is to:

- Broadly and fairly represent the interests of their region.
- Develop and coordinate a public participation process for early and effective public involvement in local and regional transportation planning.
- Advise MaineDOT on social, environmental land use issues and goals as they relate to transportation.
- Advise MaineDOT on whether a proposed project is either a significant highway project or a project of substantial public interest.

All RTAC meetings are open to the public. Agendas and meeting minutes may be sent to interested parties including municipal officials, legislators, local newspapers and citizens that have asked to be added to the mailing list. The public has an opportunity to offer input at regular and special RTAC meetings. More information about the RTACs, including contact information for each RTAC is available at: www.maine.gov/mdot/planning/planningdiv/rtachome.htm.

4.2 Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are federally designated planning organizations responsible for carrying out a continuous, comprehensive and cooperative transportation planning process for urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or more. Similar organizations exist in urban areas nationwide. Maine contains the following four MPOs:

- Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation Study (BACTS),
- Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation Study (KACTS),
- Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC), and
- Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation Study (PACTS).

The MPOs are comprised of a Policy Committee of elected and appointed officials from the municipalities within the metropolitan area, the local planning commission or council of governments, chambers of commerce and/or business representatives, local public transit providers, the Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA), if appropriate, the MaineDOT, and the US Department of Transportation. Each MPO also has a Technical Advisory Committee made up of transportation planners, engineers, advocates, and service providers making recommendations to the Policy Committee on technical matters. Additionally, PACTS has a Planning Committee that makes recommendations to the Policy Committee.

MPOs are responsible for long-range multimodal transportation plans and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) for their metropolitan areas. The long-range multimodal transportation plan provides and delivers guidance to State and local decision-makers in the development of the region's transportation system. The TIP is a capital improvement program, developed every two years in cooperation with MaineDOT. It results in a prioritized list of transportation projects, in all transportation modes, submitted for federal, State and local funding. MPO's have their own Public Participation Policies for development of their TIPs and long range multimodal transportation plans.

MPO Public Participation Policies

Although each MPO has its own Public Participation Policy, they generally:

- Encourage the general public to identify transportation problems, propose solutions and get involved in municipal decision-making.
- Solicit TIP project proposals from area municipalities and organizations.
- Identify and document the public involvement that existed in the municipal decision-making process that identified proposed projects.
- Provide a 45-day public comment period for review of the final draft list of prioritized transportation improvement projects for inclusion into their TIPs.
- Require municipal and organizational board endorsement of all proposed submissions to the MPO. Preliminary list of project proposals are posted in the municipal clerk's office for comment and review.
- Involve the public early in the project selection process and seek a broad perspective on developing the region's TIP.
- Provide the public a chance to review and comment on the proposed TIP projects prior to MPO's prioritization and submission to MaineDOT.
- Communicate with the appropriate RTAC(s) for input on regional priorities and implication of MPO programs on the broader RTAC regions.

MPO Technical and Policy Committees consider all public comments. City Councils and Boards of Selectmen endorse all projects prior to submission to MPO.

MPOs are also repositories of regional traffic data and information. As needed, MPOs respond to requests for data from local developers, businesses, planners, and citizens. The operational budget for each MPO called the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) also has public input opportunities. The UPWP details all the transportation-planning activities scheduled for accomplishment within the MPO's boundaries during the upcoming fiscal years. More information about the MPO's, including individual web page and contact information is available at: www.maine.gov/mdot/planning/eca/ecampo.htm.

4.3 Passenger Transportation Advisory Committee

The Passenger Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) was formed to provide guidance to MaineDOT's Office of Passenger Transportation in the development and implementation of the strategic passenger transportation plan, Explore Maine, and other initiatives.

PTAC is instrumental in ensuring that Explore Maine meets its goal of creating an integrated, multimodal transportation system for the people of Maine in support and promotion of tourism and car free travel. The PTAC continues oversight of Explore Maine's

implementation to ensure the development of practical and realistic transportation opportunities. The PTAC meets on an as needed basis, but generally two times a year. Meetings are open to the public. Individuals or groups may receive notices of meetings by contacting the Office of Passenger Transportation at 207-624-3250.

Customer Involvement in Decision-making

PTAC and FTAC represent MaineDOT's commitment to involve those most affected by decisions in the development and implementation of transportation plans and programs.

PTAC members include:

- transportation providers,
- tourism professionals, and
- representatives of nonprofit organizations.

FTAC members include:

- transportation providers,
- shippers, and
- manufacturers.

4.4 Freight Transportation Advisory Committee

The Freight Transportation Advisory Committee (FTAC) was created to provide MaineDOT an avenue for dialogue with members of Maine's freight transportation community. FTAC meets on an as needed basis, but generally twice a year. Meetings are open to the public. Individuals or groups may receive notices of meetings by contacting the Office of Freight Transportation at 207-624-3560.

4.5 Maine State Ferry Service Advisory Committee and Casco Bay Island Transit District

The Maine State Ferry Service (MSFS) advisory committee consists of representatives of the six islands and main land communities served by the system. It advises MaineDOT on rates, service, schedules, and other policy issues. It meets every other month and its agenda is sent to municipalities, individuals involved with ferries and other interested parties. The committee completed its first strategic plan for the MSFS in 1996. This plan addresses issues identified by the users, crews, and management of the MSFS. The plan is modified and updated every five years. MaineDOT also participates on the Casco Bay Island Transit District Board of Directors. Meetings are open to the public and interested individuals or groups may receive notices of meetings by contacting the Office of Passenger Transportation at 207-624-3250.

4.6 Maine Bicycle Council

The Maine Bicycle Council includes bicyclists throughout the State, representatives from MaineDOT, the Department of Conservation and the Bureau of Health. It advises State agencies on matters relating to bicycling, bicycle safety, bicycle safety education, bicycle access and any other pertinent issues. The Maine Bicycle Council meets bimonthly and meetings are open to the public. Meetings are advertised on the Internet and interested individuals or groups may receive notices of meetings by contacting the Office of Passenger Transportation at 207-624-3250.

4.7 Maine Port Authority

The Maine Port Authority (MePA) is authorized pursuant to MRSA 23 Section 4420 to improve the global competitiveness of Maine businesses. It works to stimulate commerce by developing marine and rail facilities, in a responsible fashion, for the intermodal movement of people and cargo. MePA holds quarterly meetings open to the public. More information about MePA is available at www.maineports.com or by calling the Maine Port Authority at 207-624-3564.

4.8 Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority

The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) was formed by the 117th Maine State Legislature in 1995 for the purpose of reinstating passenger rail service within and outside Maine beginning with restoration of service between Maine and Boston, MA. MaineDOT works closely with NNEPRA in rail passenger transportation planning in Maine. Associated passenger rail related public involvement activities range from promoting passenger rail, education about safety along rail lines and at crossings, to public involvement efforts for planning studies. Detailed information about NNEPRA is available at www.thedowneaster.com and more information about passenger transportation planning is available by contacting the Office of Passenger Transportation at 207-624-3250.

4.9 Maine Turnpike Authority

The Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) was created by the Legislature in 1941 as an independent agency. Its primary function is to operate and maintain a toll express highway through its short term and long term capital improvement plans. The STPA rule applies to the MTA as it applies to MaineDOT. Where appropriate, MaineDOT and the MTA coordinate transportation planning and subsequent public involvement efforts including joint support of RTACs and coordination with MPOs. More information regarding the MTA, including specific information about the MTA's public involvement initiatives is available at www.maineturnpike.com/index.html or may be obtained by calling 800-698-7747.

4.10 Maine Aeronautical Advisory Board

The Maine Aeronautical Advisory (MAA) Board was created in 1978 to advise MaineDOT on matters relating to aeronautics and to submit to MaineDOT's Commissioner an annual report with recommendations for proposed changes to aeronautical laws and comments upon the present and future needs of that service. Written reports and comments are available to the public. The MAA Board continues to be concerned with bringing the benefits and advantages of aviation to the attention of the general public and with improving the State's role in statewide aviation matters. The MAA Board also makes recommendations to improve the air transportation system. More information about the MAA Board is available by contacting the Office of Passenger Transportation at 207-624-3250.

5.0 Special Purpose Committees

In addition to standing advisory committees, MaineDOT works with a number of other transportation stakeholders. These groups may form in a number of ways such as by the Legislature, MaineDOT, the RTACs as subcommittees or as ad hoc citizen groups. MaineDOT's relationship with them depends on each committee's mission and role in the transportation planning process. This role ranges from an active partnership where MaineDOT participates on a committee to others where information is exchanged between MaineDOT and the different groups. The following groups are examples of different active committees.

5.1 Task Force on Rail Transportation

The Task Force on Rail Transportation was created by the 120th Legislature to develop a statewide rail policy and plan that integrates all transportation modes, to review current rail transportation policies and programs and to identify financial resources for rail. A copy of its final report which explains public involvement in its development is available at www.state.me.us/legis/opla/railrpt.PDF.

5.2 Traveler Information Advisory Committee

The Traveler Information Advisory Committee (TIAC) was created by the Legislature to advise MaineDOT on signage issues throughout Maine. It meets at least six times a year and meetings are open to the public. More information about this committee, including a schedule of meetings may be obtained by calling 207-624-3611.

Customer Involvement in Decision-making

TIAC represents MaineDOT's commitment to involve those most affected by decisions in the development and implementation of transportation plans and programs. TIAC members include representatives from the following:

- general public,
- restaurant industry,
- agriculture,
- environmental organizations,
- sign designers,
- lodging industry,
- garden clubs,
- recreation industry, and
- nonprofit historical and cultural institutions.

5.3 Corridor Committees

Corridor Planning Committees are created in a variety of ways. Their contributions to the transportation planning process range from showing regional support for infrastructure projects to recognizing the linkage between transportation and land use and working for land use planning that reflects the needs of the transportation system.

a. Project Prioritization Committees

These corridor committees make recommendations to MaineDOT on the priority of needed capital improvement projects along a highway corridor. The "Fix 26" Corridor Committee, the Downeast Route 1 Corridor Committee and the Route 9 Corridor Committee are among a number of committees established for this purpose. Committee members generally appoint their own leadership and manage their notification and input process. MaineDOT receives updates ranging from member lists, meeting minutes and transportation priorities. This input is important because a clear indication of regional support is a factor considered in the transportation planning process.

b. Scenic Byway Committees

Scenic Byway Committees may be initiated through grass roots interests or by the MaineDOT. They plan for preserving intrinsic and scenic values along a highway corridor. Provided that the planning process conforms to MaineDOT established parameters, corridor improvements may be funded with available state and federal resources. MaineDOT provides interested members of the public a Scenic Byway Corridor Planning Manual that outlines the program. More information on MaineDOT's Scenic Byway Program and copies of the manual may be obtained by contacting MaineDOT's Environmental Office at 624-3100.

c. Corridor Planning Advisory Committees (CPAC)

CPAC's are created by MaineDOT. Their mission includes planning that links transportation and land use decisions to assure that best traffic management practices are utilized along a travel corridor. Public involvement takes place through its members who are usually designated by communities and appointed by MaineDOT. MaineDOT may also appoint others who represent a variety of user needs. CPACs also have input into other public involvement initiatives associated with their planning effort. These could include public meetings, workshops, the internet, etc. For more information on these committees, contact the Bureau of Planning at 207-624-3300.

Interagency Coordination with Partner Agencies

In 1989, MaineDOT began meeting monthly with State and federal regulatory and resource agencies to discuss permitting issues. The Interagency *Permit* Meeting soon evolved into the Interagency Meeting and expanded to include discussions on integrating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), from project planning through construction, and on fostering environmental streamlining.

Building on the success of the monthly Interagency Meeting, MaineDOT and the FHWA Maine Division developed a Ten Step Environmental Streamlining process to further improve stakeholder coordination. The Ten Step process outlines stakeholder responsibilities, expectations, and concurrence points for achieving process efficiencies from planning to project implementation.

5.4 Other Partners

State and federal laws require MaineDOT to coordinate its planning process with a wide range of State and federal agencies that may also be conducting transportation planning or may be developing public policy impacting transportation. MaineDOT works with and consults with the following agencies on a regular basis:

a. Federal

U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Department of Interior
Federal Highway Administration
Federal Railroad Administration
General Services Administration
U.S. National Park Service
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency

U.S. Coast Guard
Federal Aviation Administration
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Federal Transit Administration
Interstate Bridge Authority
National Marine Fisheries Service
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

b. State

Department of Agriculture
Historic Preservation Commission
State Planning Office

Department of Marine Resources
Department of Environmental Protection
Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Department of Conservation
Department of Economic and Community Development

c. Other

Maine Municipal Association
Maine Downtown Center

Indian Tribal Governments
Regional Planning Commissions

6.0 Public Information and Outreach in Project Planning and Development

MaineDOT incorporates public input and informs the public during different stages of project specific planning and development. Since the scope and potential impacts of transportation projects vary, MaineDOT uses multiple approaches depending on potential impacts and likely public interest.

6.1 New Capacity or Projects of Substantial Public Interest

When MaineDOT considers a project of substantial public interest such as adding highway capacity, MaineDOT requires public support before funding a formal study. MaineDOT also seeks a clear indication of support from each region's Legislative delegation and locally elected officials indicating they support each project's specific purpose and need.

Once support is clearly established, MaineDOT usually begins a feasibility study. This study outlines the best range of investment options in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the Sensible Transportation Policy Act. The desired outcome of the feasibility study is the alternative evaluation and environmental impact assessment which include an investment strategy that provide the greatest benefit to the people of Maine at a reasonable cost and environmental impact. Once an alternative analysis is complete, the recommendations from the study may become prioritized improvements for the Six-Year Plan and funded in the BTIP.

Public involvement processes for these studies may take a variety of forms depending on the type of project, the study area in question, regional importance and other factors. Mechanisms range from a project specific public advisory committee, to region-wide public meetings and workshops to receive input and guide study direction at key junctures along the decision-making path. At the beginning of each study for future new capacity or projects of substantial public interest, MaineDOT will present a proposed public involvement strategy to the affected RTAC(s) for input into the public involvement process. Many of these studies have dedicated Internet sites that may be reached through www.maine.gov/mdot/planning.

6.2 Enhanced Project Scoping

This new process will better define specific scopes of work as projects move from the Six-Year Plan to the BTIP. MaineDOT will contact local officials and other potential stakeholders to determine support for projects and outline any project design considerations likely to impact cost. The number and type of projects initially developed through enhanced project scoping will be based on anticipated funding. If this program successfully incorporates public input and leads to more efficient project development, MaineDOT anticipates expanding it to all projects. Prior to implementing this program, MaineDOT will provide the RTACs an overview to solicit input. MaineDOT's Internet site, currently under construction, will provide information on active and planned projects.

Customer Responsiveness and Continuous Improvement

Based on input from the RTACs, MaineDOT is developing a new process to better define scopes of work. Earlier project scoping is expected to lead to:

- Earlier opportunity for public/ municipal input,
- Better coordination between state agencies, municipalities, utilities and businesses, and
- Improved fiscal management and project development.

6.3 Project Development

Project development processes involve a number of mechanisms for keeping the public informed and for obtaining input into project development decisions. While these methods will continue to evolve to incorporate efforts such as Enhanced Project Scoping, MaineDOT holds at least two public meetings

associated with each project. Once a project is identified in the BTIP, a preliminary public meeting is held to review information collected, to display any preliminary alignment information that has been developed and to receive public comment on the information presented. Press releases including date, time and location of meeting, project location and general description and purpose of the meeting, are sent to municipalities, local newspapers and other interested groups at least seven days but usually two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting. Abutters on the project are also sent invitations to attend the public meeting. The press release and invitation includes information on how a person may comment if they are unable to attend the public meeting.

The project team takes the information collected at the initial meeting and refines designs as necessary and practical. Then, MaineDOT holds a formal public meeting, in coordination with local officials' schedules, to discuss right of way cost estimates, utility conflicts, municipal funding coordination, major impacts, and to present the plans as developed to date. A notice including date, time and location of meeting, project location and general description as well as purpose of the meeting is published in local newspapers advertising the meeting approximately two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting. A press release is also sent to local news media indicating when, where and why the meeting will be held and providing information on how a person may offer comment if they are unable to attend. Depending upon the nature of the comments received through the public meeting, a follow up meeting(s) may be held with local officials to help determine final design direction.

7.0 General Outreach

As part of MaineDOT's transportation planning process, MaineDOT actively looks for better ways to solicit meaningful public input and inform as many individuals as possible about transportation planning. The following items represent additional public information or outreach activities.

7.1 Newsletters

MaineDOT develops and mails a wide variety of newsletters ranging from various modes of transportation to maintenance activities to policy issues. Newsletters are geared towards policy makers, planners, engineers, public works officials, special interest groups and more. Newsletter publication schedules vary. These will all be available on MaineDOT's Internet site currently under construction.

The Maine Traveler

The Maine Traveler, MaineDOT's principal newsletter, informs MaineDOT employees and the public of challenges, opportunities and projects that lie ahead for MaineDOT. The Maine Traveler is distributed to the following groups and is available at www.maine.gov/mdot/maine_traveler/homepage.htm:

- Maine Legislature,
- RTACs,
- Corridor Committees,
- MaineDOT Employees
- Municipalities, and
- Other Interested Parties.

7.2 Press Releases

Press releases inform the public through news media concerning MaineDOT activities, programs, policies and initiatives. They are designed to provide background information to editorial writers, reporters, assignment editors and other media interest. Press releases provide basic information on what the action is and a source contact. Press releases are typically sent one to two weeks before an event or just after the launch of a new initiative. Depending on content, press releases are usually sent to major Maine newspapers. Press releases may also be sent to other various news media depending on the event or issue being promoted.

7.3 MaineDOT Flash Facts

MaineDOT has launched a media campaign to promote improved driver behavior through increased public awareness of highway safety issues. MaineDOT's Safety Management Section directs the program with a public relations consulting firm. More information on this program is available at: www.maine.gov/MaineDOT/planning/safety/flash_facts.htm or may be obtained by contacting the Bureau of Planning at 207-624-3300.

7.4 Informational Videos

MaineDOT has developed a series of informational videos such as Explore Maine Revised and the Integrated Freight Plan. Copies of these videos may be obtained by contacting the Office of Freight Transportation at 207-624-3050 or the Office of Passenger Transportation at 207-624-3250.

7.5 Municipal Guide: Working with MaineDOT

The purpose of MaineDOT's municipal guide is to help municipal officials and other interested parties better understand MaineDOT's organization structure, programs and processes and where to address questions, concerns and/ or applications. This guide facilitates communication between municipal officials and MaineDOT. It may be obtained at www.maine.gov/mdot/planning/csd/muniguide.htm or by contacting the Bureau of Planning at 207-624-3300.

7.6 Surveys/ Focus Groups

MaineDOT's various bureaus and offices conduct surveys to measure customer satisfaction on a variety of transportation topics. Surveys are conducted periodically to enhance productivity and identify changing customer needs. The results of these surveys are instrumental in guiding MaineDOT efforts.

Maintenance & Operation Division Customer Outreach

MaineDOT's Division Offices regularly survey municipalities to improve relationships and identify needs. Typical questions are related to customer satisfaction with maintenance activities in both the winter and the summer and the working relationship between municipalities and local maintenance camps.

7.7 Workshops and Conferences

During the course of a year, MaineDOT conducts and participates in various workshops and conferences across the State. These venues allow communication with transportation stakeholders and are an important part of MaineDOT's public information and involvement efforts.

7.8 MaineDOT's Internet site: www.maine.gov/mdot

The MaineDOT website, currently under reconstruction, will become a mechanism for the public to learn and offer feedback on MaineDOT from how its long-term goals are developed, to its organization structure to specific efforts to accomplish its mission. The revised website is expected to be released in early summer 2003.

7.9 Travel Information Service 511

MaineDOT's Travel Information Service 511 is part of a national effort to help commuters and travelers access information regarding weather-related road conditions, construction and congestion, via the web or phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. More information about 511 is available at www.511maine.org or by dialing 511.

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